

1 Samuel 1:8-2:36 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Our Outline for 1 Samuel is based around the lives of 3 key figures:

I. Samuel Chs. 1-8

II. Saul Chs. 9-15

III. David Chs. 16-31

Last time we only managed to get through v. 7 of ch. 1, so tonight we pick it up at v. 8.

We've been introduced to the family of Elkanah.

When his first & favored wife Hannah had been found barren, he married another woman named Peninnah who'd produced a whole batch of kids. Peninnah was envious of Hannah's role as the favored wife & tormented her every chance she got, reminding her of her inability to produce a child for her husband.

Peninnah's taunts were worst when the family went to Shiloh to celebrate the religious feasts.

Hannah showed her distress by a serious depression & weeping.

8

Elkanah saw Hannah's distress & tried to reason with her.

Wasn't his love sufficient to make up for her lack of kids?

His words were hollow – because HE was the one who'd made it clear how he felt about Hannah's barrenness by bringing another woman into the home.

And the woman he'd married was the means of Hannah's torment!

His attempts at making her feel better were too little, too late, & wide of the mark.

Elkanah provides us a good example of someone who's faith only takes him so far – & that *isn't* far enough.

When it came to rituals & outward obedience to rules of religion, Elkanah was careful.

He made sure his family attended the feasts at Shiloh.

He observed the rules for sacrifice & offerings.

But he'd allowed the world & culture around him to alter his thinking regarding marriage.

God's Word was clear – In the opening lines of the Scriptures, a passage that would have been well-known to Elkanah, God's plan for marriage was spelled out: One man & one woman for life.

In cleaving to a wife, a husband *leaves* all competing loyalty; and throughout his marriage he must make sure he protects his wife, especially from any competition for his own affections.

But Elkanah had taken his cue for his family-life from the surrounding culture which *accepted polygamy*.

We need to make sure our obedience to God isn't *selective*; Obeying here, but following the ways of the world in this other thing.

We can't just go to church, listen to Worship 101, put a bumper sticker on our car & think that's the extent of our Faith in Christ.

God's Word is the manual for *all of life*; our work, school, family, finances, relationships, sex-life – all of it.

While it's true several of the OT patriarchs practiced polygamy, *never* is their family life presented as a peaceful, harmonious thing.

Their failure to follow God's plan for marriage resulted in a world of hurt for all involved.

2. Hannah's vow 1:9-18

9-10

The words describe great emotional agony.

11

While the rest of the family was packing up after the feast to go home, Hannah went to the door of the tabernacle, as close to the presence of God as she was permitted, & poured out her supplication.

She made a vow – if God would give her a son, she would give him back.

Because her husband was a priest, her son would be of the priestly line & would qualify to serve at the tabernacle.

She pledging him to be devoted to God for his entire life as a Nazirite; that's what this reference to the razor means.

In the Law of Moses, there was a provision for those who wanted to make a special vow of dedication to the Lord for a period of time, whether a few weeks or months.

The vow was a promise to abstain from all fruit of the vine, to not touch any dead thing, & to not cut one's hair.

We examined the Nazirite vow in depth when we studied *Samson*, so I'll keep this short.

Being an agricultural community where grapes, raisins, & wine were *staples*, this 3-fold vow meant separation from a normal occupation as a farmer, as well as care over what one ate at meals.

Not being able to work or enjoy the normal life of the typical Jew, the Nazirite would give him/herself to prayer, the study of the scriptures, & doing good to those in need.

Because it was difficult to maintain such a lifestyle, it was understood the Nazirite vow was *temporary*, lasting from a few weeks to a couple months.

There are only 3 people in the Bible who are identified as *life-long Nazirites*:

Samson, who didn't even *try* to keep his vow, Samuel, & *probably* John the Baptist.

Hannah is promising that the son God will give her she will devote to Him, not just to serve as a priest at Shiloh where the tabernacle is; she's saying she will raise him with a sense of dedication that marks him as a standout, even among the priests.

Hannah knew, as we will soon learn, that the spiritual state of Israel was in a really sad place.

The fault lay with the priesthood – they were not serving God with the devotion they ought.

Even her own priest-husband was living a compromised life.

So she told God that if He would give her a son, she would do her best to make

sure he grew up different.

There are a lot of people today who take the name of Christian who are living in compromise with the world.

This is the main criticism unbelievers seem to have about Christians, is that they're a bunch of hypocrites.

But every so often, they meet the real dead – someone who is totally sold out to Christ.

They aren't asking what they can get away with and still go to heaven.

They want to know what they can do to get closer to God and be useful to Him.

They're modern day Nazirites.

Not that they take a vow to abstain from the vine, or touching dead things or cutting their hair.

Rather, they've given themselves so completely to Jesus that the thought to compromise sickens them.

12-13

It was the practice for prayer in the ancient world that when you prayed, you spoke out loud.

Hannah was in such intense grief, she wanted to keep her pain private; she didn't want to be a public spectacle—so she only mouthed her words.

Eli thought this was evidence she'd had too much wine during the feast & rebuked her.

14-16

She says, "It's not wine I've been pouring out—it's *grief*."

As the high priest, Eli *ought* to have had the discernment to recognize Hannah's grief, & sought to console her.

His rebuke of a woman who's *already in distress* is a sign of how *out of touch* with the Spirit he is.

Realizing his error, -

17-18

Even though Eli was personally out of touch with God, in his office as high priest, he possessed authority—& God honored his prayer for blessing.

Hannah's faith was stimulated by Eli's words. She went away *confident* that God would grant her request.

Hannah teaches us a wonderful lesson about how to deal with depression & discouragement.

She went to the Lord with it & asked for His help.

And though it took a while before the answer came, eventually it did.

It's true that some depression is caused by bad chemistry & medication can help.

But studies show that far too much medication is being given to alleviate depression that *isn't* physiological in origin.

And here's the problem with medicating – ultimately, it doesn't *alleviate* the problem.

[Explain problem of meds vs. applying truth]

Hannah's depression & discouragement flowed from a specific root – barrenness.

As a Jewish woman in covenant with God – having a son who could carry on

the family name & promises was *essential*.
So she cried out to God.
If you struggle with depression, be encouraged to follow Hannah's example.
Identify the root cause of your emotional darkness, then ask **God** to meet your need.

3. Samuel's birth 1:19-28

19

This doesn't mean that God had **FORGOTTEN** her.

It's an *idiom* meaning God's purposes began to take *action* in her life.

Things began to move forward to accomplish God's eternal plan.

That plan was to use Hannah's son for great things.

And as we saw a couple Sundays back, until this moment, Hannah's plans for her child didn't jive with God's

If a son had come *prior* to this—Hannah would not have raised him in the manner that would fit him for his destiny.

It required her desperation & breaking before she'd be brought to the place where she would raise him to fit **God's** purposes.

Never lose hope & confidence that God is at work in ALL things to bring His good to pass in your life.

God closed her womb, which caused her to be discouraged.

Discouragement produced a bitterness of heart that drove her to desperate prayer.

Desperate prayer became answered prayer.

Samuel was born & dedicated to God —

Which led to his becoming a judge & prophet.

Which led to the kingship of David & the royal line through which the Messiah would one day be born,

Through Whom redemption would be accomplished.

It all began with what? Hannah's painful barrenness.

Contrary to the false teaching of the *success preachers*, God **does** allow affliction in the lives of His people.

He allows it for a multitude of reasons, but common to them all is this:

Affliction drives us to God & places us before Him in a position of need

Psa 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

2 Cor 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding & eternal weight of glory,

Psa 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

It's crushing pressure & blistering heat that turns a lump of ugly coal into a gorgeous diamond.

It's the irritant of a piece of sand that produces a beautiful pearl.

20

Samuel means, "heard by God."

21

What vow Elkanah had made isn't mentioned, it may have been that along with Hannah, he'd promised some special offering to God if Hannah conceived.

22

After Samuel's birth, Hannah begged off making the trip to Shiloh with the rest of the family until Samuel was weaned.

In the ancient world that was usually at 2 to 3 years of age.

Hannah's next trip to Shiloh would be the one where she left Samuel at the tabernacle in fulfillment of her promise.

23-28

This is it-Hannah keeps her promise & they turn little Sammy over to Eli who will become his foster father & train him in how to serve in the tabernacle.

4. Hannah's prayer 2:1-11

1-10

Hannah's prayer is a militant hymn of thanksgiving.

It has a remarkable amount of theological content which reveals Hannah was someone who'd spent considerable time meditating on God.

11

When the rest of the family returned, home, Samuel stayed at Shiloh.

B. Eli's Household 2:12-36

1. His wicked sons 2:12-17

12-17

We covered these verses a couple weeks ago on a Sunday.

2. Samuel serves God 2:18-21

18-19

In contrast to Eli's wicked sons was little Samuel who faithfully served God.

Each year when his family came to Shiloh for the feasts, his mother brought him a new garment to replace the one he'd grown out of.

20-21

God gave Hannah 5 more children, lifting the reproach she'd known from her rival Peninnah.

God *always* vindicates His own!

Sometimes that vindication comes in this life, and for many, it will only come in the final judgment.

But the thing to remember is that God *will* vindicate His own.

3. The prophecy against Eli's family 2:22-36

22

Not only were Hophni & Phinehas abusing the sacrificial system, they were using their authority and power as priests to seduce the women who came to worship.

There's something highly alluring about power & some women are susceptible to it.

Hophni & Phinehas took advantage of those women who were vulnerable.

What's tragic is that their father, the high priest, knew what was going on, but did nothing about it.

23-25

The idea here is that Eli had talked with his sons *many* times but they'd *refused* to listen.

They were way past the point of repentance – settled in their sin; willful, defiant, arrogant.

And this is why it says God desired to kill them.

Because they ARE past the point of no return, all they can do is more damage by spewing their moral & spiritual pollution on others.

God didn't desire to take them out because He delighted in the act of itself; His desire was to remove them before they did more harm.

Some read v. 25 & imagine that Hophni & Phinehas *wanted* to repent but God *kept* them from it just so He could slay them.

Never! God's whole heart is for sinners to repent.

But when a sinner hardens his/her heart & God sees they've passed the line into eternal unrepentance, there's nothing left but for the exercise of His perfect justice.

In v. 25, in his attempts to reason with his sons, Eli said that when a man sins against another man, God can intervene and act as the mediator or judge.

But when a man sins against the righteous God – who's going to plead the man's case?

Eli's point was to jar his sons into waking up to the seriousness of their evil.

They'd climbed out on a limb over the pit of hell & had just about sawn through it.

26

Once again we see the contrast of young Samuel's faithfulness with Hophni & Phinehas's wickedness.

27-29

Who this prophet who came to rebuke Eli was, we don't know-no name is given.

Who he is isn't important, only what he has to say.

And what he has to say isn't pretty.

It's a stinging rebuke of the high priest Eli because he's not backed up his verbal rebuke of Hophni & Phinehas with *action*.

Family loyalty had trumped his devotion to God & the result was tens of thousands of the innocent turning away from the Lord.

A bit later we will learn that Eli was incredibly obese.

V. 29 clues us in that one of the reasons why he failed to take action against his boys was because he was benefiting from evil.

In order to gain their Dad's favor so they could continue in their offices, they'd given him some of the meat they'd stolen from the people.

It can be a very difficult thing to confront evil in the lives of our family members; but we must never allow our devotion & faithfulness to the Lord to fall victim to what's difficult.

30-36

The prophet tells Eli that the high priesthood will pass from his family to another descendant of Aaron's.

That later turns out to be the family of Zadok.

As a sign that this is indeed a message from God, Eli will hear of the death of both

his sons on the same day, then he will die, and that will mark the end of his dynasty as the high priest.

From then on his descendants will only have menial jobs in the service of the Lord. Since they'd proven themselves unworthy, they'd only have a minor role.

On a bit of a technical note – ch. 2 is what is known as a *chiastic structure*.

It's found quite often in the Torah and resembles a sort of literary mirror.

ABC...CBA.

- A. The song of Hannah, concluding with reference to the Lord's anointed (2:1—10)
- B. Samuel ministers before the Lord (2:11)
 - C. The sins of Eli's sons (2:12—17)
 - D. Samuel ministers before the Lord (2:18—19)
 - E. Eli blesses Samuel's parents (2:20—21a)
 - D'. Samuel grows in the Lord's presence (2:21b)
 - C'. The sins of Eli's sons (2:22—25)
- B'. Samuel grows in the Lord's presence (2:26)
- A'. The oracle of the man of God, concluding with reference to the Lord's anointed (2:27—36)